



Home Office

User Guide to Police Workforce Statistics

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Contents

		Page
1	Introduction	3
2	Glossary	6
3	Conventions used in police workforce statistics	8
4	Police officers	9
5	Police community support officers and other designated officers	10
6	Other police staff and special constables	11
	Appendix A: Key stages in the production of the statistical release	13

1 Introduction

Statistics covered

Police Workforce, England and Wales, provides figures for the following police worker categories directly employed by the 43 Home-Office-funded police forces and the British Transport Police (BTP):

- police officers;
- police staff;
- police community support officers and other designated officers;
- special constabulary.

The main annual releases draw together statistics on the following topics:

- numbers of officers and other police workers in post;
- numbers of joiners and leavers;
- gender and ethnicity breakdowns.

The shorter mid-year releases contain statistics on the numbers of officers and other police workers in post as at 30 September each year.

Quality and methodology

Each of the statistical collections covered by this release are by-products of police administrative processes. They are all listed in the *Annual Data Requirement* (ADR) document (web link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/annual-data-requirement-from-police-forces-in-england-and-wales>).

Key stages of the collection process are listed in Appendix A.

The published figures on the police workforce are sourced from police forces' personnel records. The Home Office is working with police forces to fully understand the processes and limitations of the data.

As part of the data confirmation process (as described in Appendix A), the Home Office asked forces about the quality of their data, with a particular reference to how closely linked the workforce data provided are to personnel records. For the 2013/14 round, nearly half of the 44 police forces in England and Wales responded, and all reported that the data were generated directly from the HR systems or were compiled indirectly from this system.

Uses

Statistics on the police workforce are used for a variety of purposes, including:

Informing the general public's choices:

- a) **about the state of the economy, society and the environment** – figures on the police workforce and recorded crime are used frequently by the media in articles on law and order;
- b) **about the performance of government and public bodies** – figures on levels and trends in the police workforce are requested via Parliamentary Questions and Freedom of Information cases to gauge performance in general or in specific areas.

Government policy making and monitoring: Police workforce statistics are used to monitor the performance and effectiveness of police forces. Statistics on the ethnicity and gender of police officers are included in overall assessments of race and women in the criminal justice system; see link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-justice/series/criminal-justice-statistics>.

Resource allocation – typically by central and local government: All these statistics demonstrate the range, extent and quality of police activities, and contribute to overall cases for police funding.

Informing public marketing campaigns: Police workforce statistics are used to measure the effectiveness of recruitment campaigns by individual police forces or nationally.

Supporting third sector activity – lobbying: Police workforce statistics are used by a variety of civil liberties, road and public safety lobbies.

Facilitating academic research: Research into policing and criminology often uses police statistics such as workforce and recorded crime.

User experiences

Since 2013 the publication of the 31 March release has been planned in discussion with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), so that its value-for-money reports use a consistent police workforce dataset.

The Home Office answers on average 20–30 Parliamentary Questions per year on aspects of police workforce statistics. Most of them call for figures that are published in the police workforce releases, or involve a more detailed breakdown of the dataset. A frequent theme has been the deployment of police officers and staff by function. In response, the Home Office started publishing an annual supplementary table in 2012, containing police officers, staff and police community support officers by function and police force area.

The Home Office conducted a survey for the 31 March 2014 *Police Workforce, England and Wales* statistical release so that the department could assess how well it met users' needs and could potentially make improvements where possible.

There were 31 responses to the survey. Key points include the following.

- Nearly a half of responses were from police forces. The remaining responses were from the general public and a range of other organisations.
- Over half of respondents found all the information they required. Of those who found only some or none of the information they sought:
 - some respondents reported that they were unable to open/access the ODS (Open Document Spreadsheet) data tables; *in response to this, the Home Office is considering publishing the data tables in Excel.*
 - some respondents reported that it would be useful to publish the release in PDF format; *The Home Office will be publishing the 'Police Workforce, England and Wales, 31 March 2015' publication in PDF format, as well as HTML.*
- Over three quarters of respondents reported that they had used the data tables, over half reported that they had used the main commentary, and one third reported that they had used the statistical news release. Six respondents stated that they had used the user guide. For those respondents that had used the tables, commentary and statistical news release, the majority reported that they were satisfied with them. For the user guide, the majority reported that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with it.
- The most commonly reported use of the information was for comparisons between police forces.

Figures for other countries

Quarterly statistics on the number of police officers employed by Scottish police forces are broken down by police force and deployment and are published on the Scottish Government's website:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/PublicationPoliceStrength>.

Police workforce statistics that include secondments and temporary transfers to other ranks are published on the Police Service of Northern Ireland website:

http://www.psni.police.uk/index/updates/updates_statistics/updates_strength_of_police_service_statistics.htm.

European comparisons of the numbers of police officers appear periodically in Eurostat's Statistics in Focus series. The most recent, *Trends in Crime and Criminal Justice, 2010*, contains annual figures up to 2010 for individual European countries on its website at: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-statistics-in-focus/-/KS-SF-13-018>.

Acknowledgements

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Finally, we would also like to thank those colleagues in the Science Information and Publication Team (SIPT) of Home Office Science who assist in preparing the web pages.

Where are the latest published figures?

Forthcoming publications are pre-announced on the gov.uk website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements>.

The *Police Workforce, England and Wales* and other Home Office statistical releases are available from the Home Office pages of the gov.uk website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/home-office/about/statistics>.

Older publications can be found on the UK Government Web Archive:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110218135832/http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/hosbarchive.html>.

Feedback and enquiries

If you have any feedback on the releases, any other feedback or any enquiries, please email them to policestats@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk or write to: Home Office Statistics, 1st Floor, Peel Building, 2 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4DF.

Police Workforce, England and Wales is designated as 'National Statistics', a subset of official statistics that has been granted accreditation by the UK Statistics Authority. National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice and undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from political interference.

2 Glossary

Available for duty – numbers of officers or staff in post, excluding **long-term absentees**.

Chief Officers - Includes Assistant Chief Constables, Deputy Chief Constables and Chief Constables, and their equivalents in the Metropolitan Police and City of London Police. These police officers were previously referred to as Association of Chief Police Officer (ACPO) ranks; however on 1 April 2015 ACPO was replaced by the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC).

Contract staff – police workforce working for police forces but not directly employed by them. Excludes all **police officers** (officers do not work on a contract basis) and those on **secondment**.

Designated officers – skilled police staff (who are not police officers) employed to exercise specific powers that would otherwise be available to police officers. Designation can be to one or more of four roles: **police community support officer (PCSO)**, investigation officer, detention officer and escort officer. More details of the coverage and underlying legislation appear in section 5 of this user guide.

Financial year – the 12 months ending on 31 March.

Full-time equivalent (FTE) – count of police workers that takes account of part-time working practices. For example, a full-time employee is counted as 1.0 and a part-time employee who works 70 per cent of normal hours is counted as 0.7. It accounts for contracted hours, rather than actual hours worked that might include overtime.

Government Office Region (GOR) – the Government Office Regions have been the primary classification for the presentation of regional statistics, although the regional government offices were closed in 2011. There are nine GORs in England: North East; North West; Yorkshire and the Humber; East Midlands; West Midlands; Eastern; London; South East; and South West. In this report analysis by region also includes separate analysis for Wales.

Headcount – an alternative measure to full-time equivalent, it counts all employees as 1.0, whether full- or part-time.

Joiners – includes new recruits to the police and transfers from other police forces. Further details on coverage appear in sections 4 (**police officers**), 5 (**PCSOs and designated officers**) and 6 (**police staff and specials**) of this user guide.

Leavers – includes resignations, normal and medical retirements, dismissals, deaths and transfers to other police forces. Further details on coverage appear in sections 4 (**police officers**), 5 (**PCSOs and designated officers**), and 6 (**police staff and specials**) of this user guide.

Long-term absentees – police workers who are either on a career break, compassionate leave, maternity/paternity leave, special leave, study leave, suspension, or sick leave and have been absent for at least 28 calendar days.

Police community support officers (PCSOs) – one type of **designated officer**, they are police staff employed in a highly visible, patrolling role. More details on the roles of PCSOs and underlying legislation appear in section 5 of this user guide.

Police officers – employees of a police force, who have taken an oath (under the Police Act 1996) to uphold the law. Details of which officers are included in the statistics appear in section 4 of this user guide.

Police staff – support staff employed by a police force, other than **police officers** and **designated officers** (except where specified). Details on coverage appear in section 6 of this user guide.

Police workers – persons employed by the police, whether **police officer** or **police staff**.

Population figures – some of the tables and graphs in the main annual release use population figures to calculate the total number of police officers per 100,000 population. The population figures used for the 31 March 2015 statistics are mid-2013 population estimates based on the 2011 Census, provided by the Office for National Statistics.

Secondment – police officers who are employed by one police force but are on loan to another.

Special constables (specials) – part-time volunteer officers who have all the same powers as regular **police officers**.

Standard direct recruit – police officers who join the police service and were not transferring from another force, re-joining or were not previously a **special constable**.

Traffic wardens – staff employed by police forces for parking enforcement duties. Excludes those employed by local authorities.

Wastage rate – leavers as a proportion of the workforce.

3 Conventions used in police workforce statistics

Rounding

Data are mainly provided unrounded in the data tables of *Police Workforce, England and Wales*. This is to promote transparency and allow users to exploit the data further.

However, caution should be taken when comparing small differences between time periods; while care is taken in collecting and collating all the information obtained, the figures are subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large recording system and are not necessarily accurate to the last digit.

If data are published in a table in a rounded form, the footnotes to that table explain the reasons for doing this.

Percentages are rounded to the nearest per cent using the round-half-away-from-zero method.

The round-half-away-from-zero method has been used, so that in the borderline case where the fraction of the percentage is exactly 0.5, the rounded figure is equal to $y + 0.5$ if y is positive, and $y - 0.5$ if y is negative. For example, 23.5 per cent is rounded to 24 per cent, and -23.5 per cent is rounded to -24 per cent. When rounding whole numbers the result is similar; e.g. when rounding to the nearest 100, 1,250 would be reported as 1,300.

Where data are rounded, they may not sum to the totals shown, or, in the case of percentages, to 100 per cent, because they have been rounded independently.

Use of symbols

The following symbols have been used in the tables:

- .. not available;
- * not applicable.

Rewards to data

Data for the latest full calendar year or financial year may be revised in due course. It is the authors' standard practice to incorporate revisions for previous years in the latest release. Corrections and revisions follow the Home Office corporate revisions policy: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statement-of-compliance-with-code-of-practice-for-official-statistics>, page 6.

4 Police officers

Coverage

The *Police Workforce, England and Wales* release contains figures on numbers of police officers employed by the 43 Home-Office-funded police forces in England and Wales. These forces can cover individual counties (e.g. Northamptonshire) or groups of counties (e.g. Dyfed-Powys).

The headline figures comprise the total number of police officers in these 43 forces, and the measure used is for the full-time equivalent (FTE) number of police officers in post. This measure includes those officers on career breaks or maternity/paternity leave for a period exceeding 28 days at the end of the reporting period.

Additionally, figures are published for officers working in the British Transport Police (BTP) in England and Wales, and officers on secondment from the 43 forces to central services: central government departments and agencies such as the Home Office and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary.

As well as the headline FTE totals, headcount figures are published for numbers of officers in post and numbers of officers available for duty. The latter figure excludes police officers on long-term absences: career breaks; compassionate leave; maternity/paternity leave; special leave; study leave; suspensions; and long-term sickness. All these absences are for periods exceeding 28 days at the end of the reporting period.

The officer figures in this release do not include all police officers working in England and Wales. They exclude those employed by, or seconded to, police forces other than the 43 forces and BTP, e.g. Royal Parks, port constabularies and military police.

Joiners and leavers

The number of officers joining a police force in a reporting period includes the following elements:

- standard direct recruits into the police (includes those who were previously police community support officers);
- police officers who were formerly special constables;.
- police officers transferring from another police force;
- police officers re-joining, having previously resigned.

The number of officers leaving a police force in a reporting period includes the following elements:

- dismissals;
- voluntary resignations;
- medical retirements;
- normal retirements (including those who retire under Regulation A19 of the Police Pensions Regulations 1987, in which an officer can be required to retire after at least 30 years' service if retention 'would not be in the general interests of efficiency');
- transfers to another force.

5 Police community support officers and other designated officers

Police community support officers (PCSOs)

PCSOs are police staff employed in a highly visible, patrolling role. They complement the work of police officers by focusing predominantly on low-level crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour. They also free up police officers' time by taking on those policing functions that do not require the full expertise of a police officer. The legislation for PCSOs was introduced as part of the Police Reform Act 2002. The Act enables force chief officers to designate PCSOs with limited enforcement powers. Unlike police officers they do not have the power of arrest, but there is a range of standard powers that they hold (e.g. to stop and search members of the public in certain situations). Additionally, each chief officer has the discretion to delegate any one of a further number of powers (e.g. to seize drugs, or issue fixed penalty notices for certain offences). The first PCSOs started work on the streets of London in September 2002.

Designated officers

Designated officers are persons employed by the police authority who have been chosen by chief officers to exercise specific powers that would otherwise only be available to police officers. Despite having these powers, designated officers are not police officers. They were introduced as part of the Police Reform Act 2002, sections 38 and 39 and this legislation enables the appropriate designation of skilled police staff to one or more of four roles:

- police community support officer (PCSO);
- investigation officer;
- detention officer; and
- escort officer.

Statistics on PCSOs are quoted separately. (Note: Police authorities in England and Wales ceased to exist for police force areas outside London on 22 November 2012 when they were replaced by directly elected police and crime commissioners).

The totals for designated officers used in *Police Workforce, England and Wales* include those directly employed by the police force (under section 38 of the Act) as well as contract staff (under section 39).

Joiners and leavers

See Section 6 of this user guide for details on coverage for all police staff other than police officers.

6 Other police staff and special constables

Police staff

In *Police Workforce, England and Wales*, the term 'police staff' is used to describe all staff employed by the police force, other than police officers, police community support officers (PCSOs), other designated officers and traffic wardens (except where specified). Elsewhere the term is sometimes used more widely to describe all staff other than police officers.

The figures in this release include staff on fixed-term contracts, but do not include contract staff employed by private companies. It is difficult to accurately measure all types of contract staff in terms of numbers of staff working at a particular time, because of the nature of the services provided, and so figures for contract staff are excluded from the *Police Workforce, England and Wales* releases. This may result in some artificial falls in police staff totals, if police forces use contract staff to provide various services.

Traffic wardens

Figures for numbers of traffic wardens quoted in this release have become very small, and may ultimately reach zero, as police forces transfer these duties to local authorities. From the March 2014 release onwards, police force breakdowns ceased to be published due to the very low numbers.

Special constables

Special constables are members of the public who volunteer to help the police in their duties. They have the same powers as regular officers, but do not have fixed working hours (as they may fit their time around their paid work, for example) and therefore it is inappropriate to collect figures in terms of full-time equivalent. Figures are presented in terms of headcount only.

More information on special constables appears on <http://www.policespecials.com/> or on each police force's website.

Joiners and leavers

The number of non-officer staff joining a police force in a reporting period includes the following elements.

- direct recruits into the police force (including special constables);
- police staff transferring from another police force;
- police staff re-joining, having previously resigned.

The number of officers leaving a police force in a reporting period includes the following elements:

- dismissals and compulsory redundancies;
- voluntary resignations (including staff who leave under voluntary redundancy or exit schemes);
- special constables who have been inactive for more than 12 months;
- special constables who leave to join the regular constabulary;
- medical retirements;
- normal retirements;

- transfers to another force;
- deaths (on active duty or otherwise).

APPENDIX A: KEY STAGES IN THE PRODUCTION OF THE STATISTICAL RELEASE

A. PREPARATORY WORK

Annual Data Requirement (ADR) process (during the 12 months prior to the data period):

- consultation with forces and stakeholders; all stakeholders complete a questionnaire to justify the retention (or otherwise) of each of their statistical series;
- requests for changes or additions to the ADR considered by the ADR committee (which weighs up the benefits against administrative burden); and
- ADR committee decisions for inclusion in the final ADR for submission for Home Secretary's approval.

Review of IT systems (during the 12 months prior to the data period):

- incorporate amendments/additions/withdrawals; and
- any case for IT work incurring costs to be justified and approved by budget manager.

Issue statistical returns, covering letter and notes for guidance to police forces (around the start of the data period).

Agree and pre-announce the provisional date of publication of the statistical bulletin on the Office for National Statistics (ONS) publication hub (around 9–12 months prior to publication).

Review content of the statistical bulletin and other regular outputs (around six months prior to publication), and agree findings with stakeholders. Any substantial reduction in content of statistical release would require a consultation with users.

Review and update project plan for the new financial year (around six months prior to publication):

- include all the milestones in this framework, plus deadlines and measures of criticality (e.g. a traffic light system);
- timings to fit in with staffing levels, pressures and the relative priorities of each series;
- timings also to fit in with National Statistics pre-announced months of publication (with no series to be published more than 12 months after the data period) and policy demands.

B. DATA INPUT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

Police forces' submission of returns within deadline:

- data collection section deals with force queries on completion of return;
- output team deals with all other queries about notes for guidance, definitions, release practice, recording practice;
- data collection section logs and ensures that returns are correctly input electronically.

Chase late and incomplete returns after deadline for completion, by the data collection section.

Receipt and input of late returns. Estimates are sometimes entered for missing data or if a police force cannot provide figures comparable with the previous period (because of a gap in data recording, for example). This is a last resort though, and the Home Office will first try to enforce the mandatory nature of the returns. There have been no recent examples of headline police workforce figures having been estimated.

Validation and variation checks and taking up issues with forces. These checks are a combination of automated error checks and analytical checks from data extracts.

The automated variation checks for police workforce statistics have a threshold of + or - 0.25 per cent between the current and previous year for values over 100, and a sliding scale between + or - 0.35 per cent and + or - 0.5 per cent for values between 10 and 100.

Validation checks are mainly cross references between different police workforce returns. For example, the total of workforce breakdowns by ethnicity, age and length in service must match the main workforce totals.

Receipt and input of revised returns following validation check, and satisfactory reasons or revisions provided following variation checks.

Reconciliation exercises (where appropriate). A reconciliation exercise applies when figures from one collection need to be checked with those from another collection. The figures do not have to match but the differences need to be properly explained. In past years, we have accepted small differences between the total of the breakdown by police function and the overall total, but due to the increased importance of the functions collection in inspections of police performance, these two totals are now precisely matched.

Production of complete validated dataset according to required standards.

Final checks to ensure data of publishable standard, before data confirmation exercise (see below).

C. PREPARATION FOR PUBLICATION

Prepare detailed publication schedule (at least three months before publication), containing all specific tasks, milestones and staff allocated to them.

Agree and pre-announce finalised day of publication (around one to three months before publication).

Data confirmation exercise. All police forces are sent the figures for its force that will appear in the publication and asked to provide written confirmation. This is to reduce further the risk of incorrect figures being published, and supports the Home Office in any disagreement with a police force over the figures published for that force.

Receipt and input of revised data where appropriate following the data confirmation exercise.

Produce dataset for use in publication.

Prepare draft of tables, charts and commentary and circulate to nominated people for quality assurance (this group appears on the pre-release access list) (two to three weeks before publication).

Statistics news release and pre-release access sent for preparation of HTML web pages.

The commentary, tables, charts and statistics news release are circulated 24 hours before publication to a nominated list of people (including ministers and press office) as shown on pre-release access list.

Meet with Home Office colleagues on 24-hour pre-release list to discuss content and handling issues.

Publication.

D. FOLLOW-UP WORK

Wash-up meeting on process of publication. Agree actions for next year and lessons learned.

Published dataset to be used for Parliamentary Questions, Freedom of Information and other enquiries (until following publication).